

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8778

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 3120

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ES, PORG, PINT, PGOV, SHUM

SUBJECT: AFTERAFFECTS OF JULY 30 STUDENT MARCH

REF: SAN SALVADOR 3042

SAN SALVADOR 3079

HSS 2938

HSS 2946

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

1. SAN SALVADOR FORTUITOUSLY ENTERED THE LONG WEEKEND HOLIDAY OF LOS AGOSTINAS (SATURDAY AUGUST 2 THOUGH WEDNESDAY AUGUST 6) GIVING PASSIONS ON ALL SIDES OF THE CONFRONTATIONAL POLITICAL SITUATION A CHANCE TO CALM DOWN. SEVERAL EVENTS WHICH RESULTED FROM, OR IN THE PUBLIC MIND WERE CONNECTED WITH, THE PROTEST MARCH'S TRAGIC ENDING NEVERTHELESS CARRIED THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS.

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2. OCCUPATION OF SAN SALVADOR'S CATHEDRAL - ON AUGUST 1, FOLLOWING

A FUNERAL MASS IN DOWNTOWN SAN SALVADOR FOR ONE OF THE STUDENTS KILLED BY THE NATIONAL GUARD ON JULY 30, (THE ONLY DEATH OFFICIALLY ACKNOWLEDGED BY THE GOES), A SMALL GROUP OF STUDENTS OCCUPIED THE DOWNTOWN METROPOLITAN CATHEDRAL, BARRICADED THEMSELVES IN, BUILT LOW STONE WALLS TO BLOCK TRAFFIC ALONG THE CITY'S MAIN THOROUGHFARE, AND BEGAN DENOUNCING THE GOVERNMENT'S REPRESSION OF STUDENT PROTEST. (SEE HSS-2946 FOR DETAILS). THE STUDENTS WERE JOINED BY A SMALL NUMBER

OF SYMPATHETIC CHURCH WORKERS, INCLUDING SEVERAL NUNS AND THE ALAS BROTHERS, RADICAL CATHOLIC PRIESTS ACTIVE IN STUDENT-CHURCH-CAMPESINO ACTIVITIES. THE CHIEF DEMANDS OF THE OCCUPIERS WERE: THE IMMEDIATE DISMISSAL OF MOD ROMER, NATIONAL GUARD COMMANDER CO. ROSALES Y ROSALES, AND THE COMMANDER OF THE HACIENDA POLICE, COL. ALVARENGA, ACCUSED OF BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR THE STUDENT DEATH(S) ON JULY 30; RELEASE OF ALL STUDENT PRISONERS IN SAN SALVADOR AND SANTA ANA; AND THE REMOVAL OF CARLOS ALFARO AS UES ACTING RECTOR. THE SQUATTERS WERE ABLE TO SUSTAIN THEIR OCCUPATION FOR SIX DAYS. THE SECURITY SERVICES DID NOT TRY TO DISLODGE THEM, DESPITE THE GOVERNMENT'S STRONG DECLARATIONS THAT IT WOULD NOT TOLERATE DISRUPTION OF PUBLIC ORDER. THE ARCHBISHOP OF SAN SALVADOR, WHILE DEPLORING THE EVENTS OF JULY 30, TERMED THE CATHEDRAL OCCUPATION AN "INAPPROPRIATE" GESTURE, PARTICULARLY DURING A TIME OF RELIGIOUS HOLIDAY OBSERVANCE. DURING THE EVENING OF AUGUST

6. THE ARCHBISHOP ISSUED A SECOND COMMUNIQUE WHICH DESCRIBED AN INTENSE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE AUTHORITIES AND THOSE IN THE CATHEDRAL AS HAVING PRODUCED AN AGREEMENT BY THE OCCUPIERS VOLUNTARILY TO VACATE THE PREMISES BY MIDNIGHT OF THE SAME DAY. THE ARCHBISHOP ANNOUNCED A SPECIAL SOLEMN MASS FOR SUNDAY IN OBSERVANCE OF "THESE PAINFUL EVENTS WHICH HAVE CAUSED GRAVE ANXIETY AND GRIEF" DURING THE LAST WEEK. THE STUDENTS AND THEIR CLERICAL SUPPORTERS ABANDONED THE CATHEDRAL AS ANNOUNCED.

3. RADIO STATION TAKEOVER - ON WEDNESDAY AUGUST 6, TWO YOUTH AUTOMATIC WEAPONS "CAPTURED" SAN SALVADOR RADIO STATION YSKL WHILE IT BROADCAST A HOLIDAY SOCCER MATCH. AFTER TAKING UP EMPLOYEES, THE TERRORISTS PUT ON A TAPE AND DEPARTED. THE REVOLUTIONARY MESSAGE WAS TRANSMITTED FOR FIFTEEN MINUTES, AND WAS CLAIMED AS THE WORK OF THE ERP (EJERCITO REVOLUCIONARIO DEL PUEBLO), WHICH PREVIOUSLY CONFIDENTIAL

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GAINED PUBLIC ATTENTION AS THE SELF-PROCLAIMED KIDNAPPER OF FINANCER CHICO DE SOL, LAST JUNE. THE ERP TAPE CLAIMED THAT IT HAD LAUNCHED ATTACKS AGAINST THE NATIONAL GUARD AND NATIONAL POLICE. (SECURITY SERVICE SOURCES CONFIRMED THAT A BOMB WAS THROWN AT THE NATIONAL GUARD INFIRMARY AND ANOTHER AT NATIONAL POLICE HQTRS. NEITHER EXPLODED).

4. DEATH OF BANK GUARD ON MONDAY AUGUST 4, A BANK GUARD WAS SHOT

AND KILLED IN A STRUGGLE WITH TWO UNIDENTIFIED YOUTHS. THE GUARD'S WEAPON WAS TAKEN. SINCE THE ATTACKERS WERE YOUNG, THE BANK WAS WITHIN TWO BLOCKS OF THE UNIVERSITY, AND THEY FLED TOWARDS THE CAMPUS, MANY BELIEVE THE KILLING WAS IN REVENGE FOR THE DEATHS OF THE STUDENT MARCHERS.

5. COMMENT: THE HOLIDAYS DID NOT ERUPT, AS SOME THOUGHT THEY WOULD, IN POLITICAL VIOLENCE. THE SECURITY FORCES DID NOT TRY TO FORCE OBEDIENCE OF THE LAW ON THE CATHEDRAL OCCUPANTS NOR DID THE STUDENTS AND THEIR ALLIES MOUNT MUCH OF ANYTHING FROM THEIR SIDE. THE QUESTION NOW IS WHETHER OR NOT THE OUTCRY OVER THE GOVERNMENT'S REPRESSION OF THE JULY 30 STUDENT MARCH HAS MAINTAINED ITS HEAD OF STEAM THROUGH THE FIVE DAY HOLIDAY HIATUS. IF IT HAS, AND IF THE UES CLASSES RESUME ON AUGUST 9 (THE ACTING RECTOR SUSPENDED ALL CLASSES ON JULY 31, "UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE"), THE TENSIONS OF LAST WEEK COULD QUICKLY REAPPEAR.

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